THE CENTENNIAL OF METHODISM

in Rolla, Missouri

1861-1961

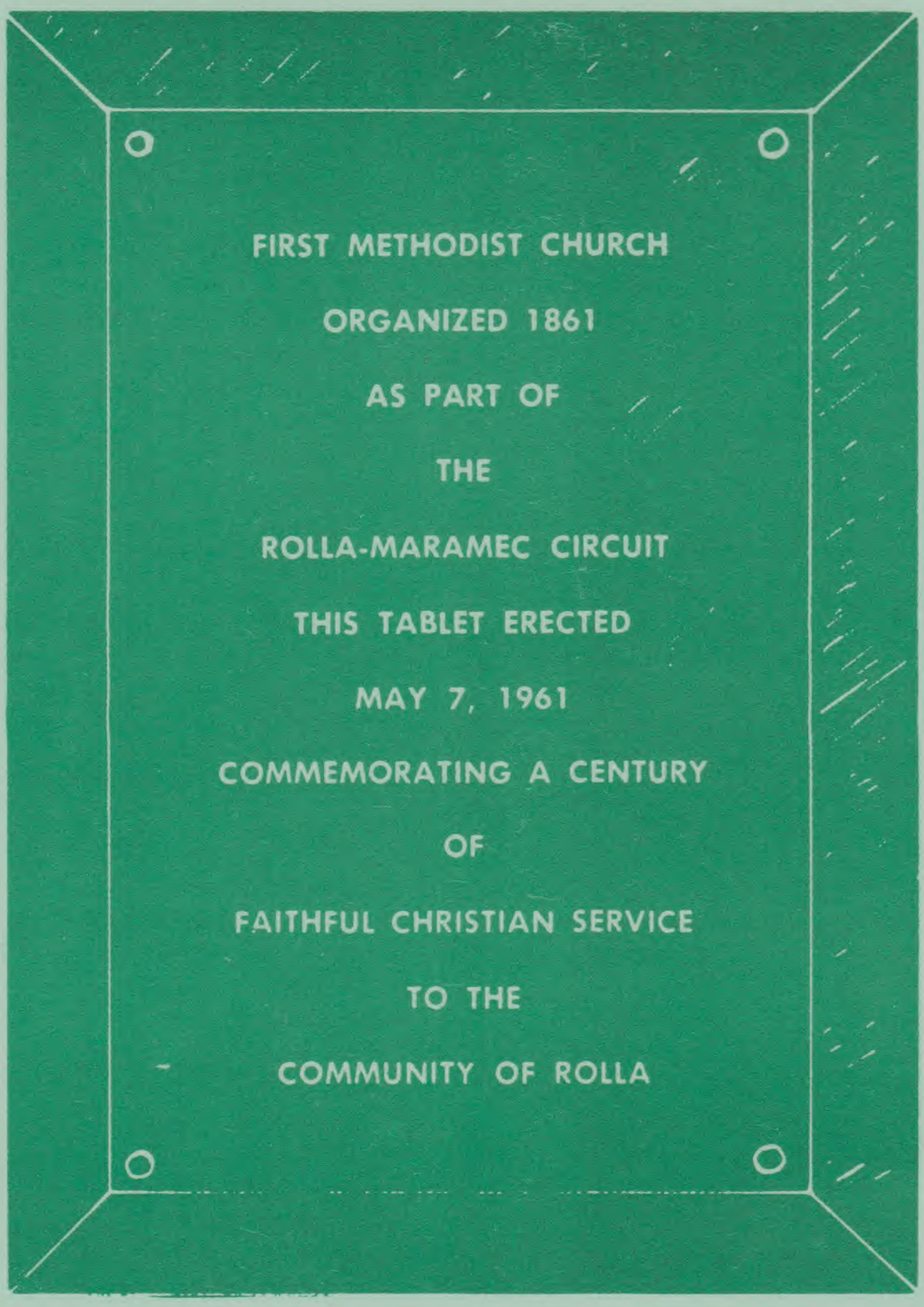
Centennial Postscript

The First United Methodist Church

Rolla Missouri 23 May 1976

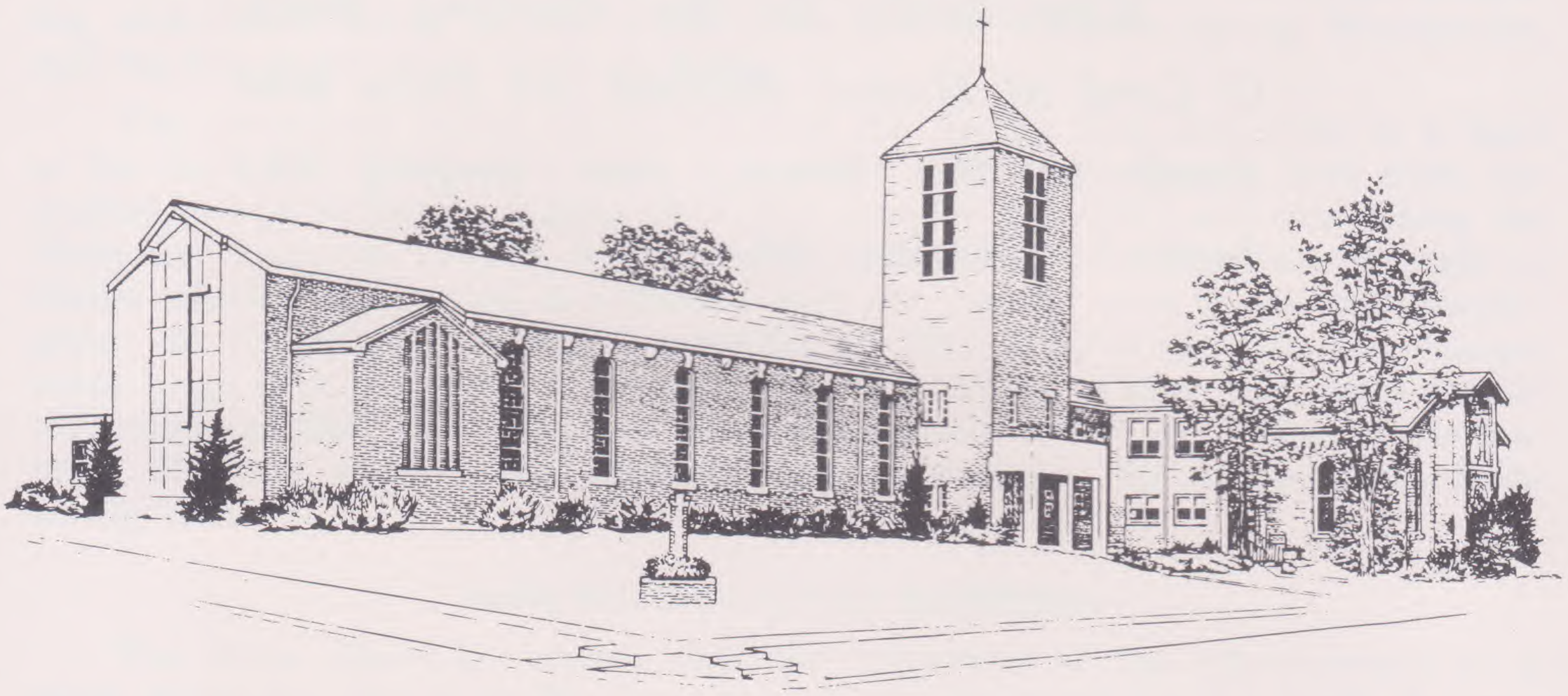
Centennial Celebration

May 7, 1961


FIRST METHODIST CHURCH
ORGANIZED 1861
AS PART OF
THE
ROLLA-MARAMEC CIRCUIT
THIS TABLET ERECTED
MAY 7, 1961
COMMEMORATING A CENTURY
OF
FAITHFUL CHRISTIAN SERVICE
TO THE
COMMUNITY OF ROLLA

THE CENTENNIAL OF METHODISM

in Rolla, Missouri



Centennial Postscript

The First United Methodist Church

Rolla Missouri 23 May 1976

1861-1961

How lovely is thy dwelling place, O Lord of Hosts! Blessed are those who dwell in thy house, ever singing thy praise! —Psalms 84.

This history was adapted by Winona C. Roberts from "A Partial History of the Methodist Church at Rolla, Missouri," by Bonita H. Mann and Dr. Clair V. Mann, 1956.

A Partial History of the

Methodist Church of Rolla, Mo.

The true history of a church does not exist alone in the facts contained in the records of a church. What has happened at the communion rail, the baptismal font, the altar where vows were taken cannot be recorded. The history of the First Methodist Church of Rolla is the reflection of the spiritual experiences in the individual lives of the many hundreds of persons who have gone in and out of the church during the past 100 years.

The exact date of the coming of Methodism to Rolla is not known. Methodist, as well as other denominational circuit riding units, grew up on all sides of Rolla before any preaching was done here at all, even before there was any county of Phelps or town of Rolla. The nearest preaching station to Rolla was at Maramec Spring, where the James and Massey Iron Works (Maramec Iron Works) had been established in 1826. From 1826 to 1845, there had been sporadic Methodist preaching, with riders coming as near to the Rolla area as Maramec Spring, Waynesville, and the Gasconade River north of Rolla.

The dissensions within the church over the slavery issue had come to a head at the General Conference in 1844. As a result, with the consent of both sides, the southern states withdrew, holding their first conference in 1845 and establishing the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. Every Methodist society then had the right to choose whether they would be affiliated with the "north" wing or the new "south" group. At the Missouri Annual Conference of 1845, most of the Missouri charges voted to go with the south. From that date, there seems to have been some sort of understanding that all of Missouri Methodism would follow the wishes of the majority. However, some "north" churches were established in the ensuing years, Rolla among them.

Rolla-Maramec Circuit Established

The Rolla Methodist church was the outgrowth of the establishment of a north Methodist church at Maramec Iron Works on September 13, 1849. As soon as there was a Rolla (not until 1858-60, nine years later) the Maramec charge and circuit was enlarged to include Rolla, and for a time was then called the Rolla-Maramec charge or circuit. The best educated guess is that this circuit was created sometime in 1860. It is certain, from newspaper accounts, that the Rev. Stanford Ing, who was later so prominently connected with the Rolla Methodist Church, preached at Rolla in May of 1860.

At that time Rolla was a hamlet of some 300 inhabitants, with as many as 75 houses and stores. As Rolla was a "child of the railroad," the town's earliest days brought numerous questionable characters, gamblers and speculators. Along with them, however, came also the substantial core of permanent citizens. Those first two years saw no schools, no churches, no government other than that provided by the county.

In January, 1861, Rolla was given its charter by the state legislature. During the next few months, the infant city suffered within its boundaries something of the strife which soon divided the entire nation. Strong partisans of both the north and south lived in Rolla. The period prior to the bombardment of Fort Sumter had

been comparatively peaceful, the belief prevailing that Rolla, and Missouri, should remain in the Union.

The fall of Sumter served to crystallize Rolla's dormant secession sentiment. For one month, from May 10 to June 14, 1861, Rolla was in the hands of the "south." After Union troops arrived, Rolla was always safely in the hands of the Union, and was ordered to be held at all costs by President Lincoln himself. During that one month, however, Union sympathizers had plenty to worry about, as armed bands of southerners paraded the town, searching homes, threatening "tar and feathers," or worse, to residents.

Atmosphere at Birth of Church

This, then, was the environment and atmosphere in which the Rolla Methodist Church was born. At about that time, the first Methodist preacher was stationed at Rolla, the Rev. William Sellers. He was, as Mr. Ing had been, a Rolla-Maramec circuit preacher, not merely a Rolla pastor. Although regular preaching services were being held at that time, in his day the First Methodist Church of Rolla had not been organized as such.

It was during the pastorate of the Rev. and Mrs. Francis Beggs who succeeded Mr. Sellers on the Rolla-Maramec circuit for the 1861-62 year that the formal First Methodist Church of Rolla was organized with 16 charter members.

Although there is no written record of the actual creation of the organized Methodist church, it is certain that such an organization was functioning on June 4, 1862, for on that day Mr. and Mrs. E. W. Bishop executed to the "Board of Trustees of the Methodist Episcopal Church" their deed for lots 1 and 2, Block 34, upon which the church was built. The trustees were the Rev. Stanford Ing (then stationed at Rolla as chaplain with the 18th Missouri Cavalry), his son, John Ing, John Copeland, John F. Waits, and Henry Beal. The instrument was sealed in the presence of the Rev. Francis S. Beggs, then the Rolla pastor.

Miss Gertrude Beggs, daughter of the pastor, has left a list of all the names of charter members she could recall: Mr. and Mrs. Albert S. Long; Mrs. Lem Morgan and her mother, Mrs. Frank Webster; Mr. and Mrs. Brazilla Dean, and, of course, Mr. and Mrs. Beggs. It is assumed that the Trustees were also members: the Rev. and Mrs. Stanford Ing and son, John; Mr. and Mrs. John Copeland; John F. Waits, and Henry Beal. Charles P. Walker, *Rolla Express* editor, may have been the sixteenth charter member.

Report on Rolla's First Sunday School

Charles Walker gives us a report of Rolla's first Sunday School organized by the Beggs in June of 1862:

> **"A Sunday School has, at last, been organized in Rolla, with a full complement of teachers, and a respectable number of scholars. Through the liberality of several citizens, the school has been provided with a library of interesting books.**
>
> **"The School is under the more especial supervision of the M. E. (Methodist) Church, though by no means confined to that denomination, and all persons, without regard to religious predilections, are invited to participate. Attached there is a Bible Class, so that it is adapted to the wants of all.**
>
> **"It is a cheerful sight to see the interesting group of children and teachers that assemble each Sabbath morning, to study the Word of God. How much better it is for boys and girls to be thus engaged than to be running wild and dirty in the street, learning nothing good, but everything bad."**

It is thought that this Sunday School, first perhaps held in the Court House, was later, and at the time of the editorial, held in the historic Masonic building, still standing at the northeast corner of Fourth and Main streets. This building

could truly be called the "Cradle of Rolla's Churches." The Methodists first used it thus, as did other denominations, and it was probably there that the Reverends Ing, Sellers, Beggs and Witten preached to their parishioners. There, also, was the location of the Methodist Rolla College which opened its doors in 1867.

Although a Roman Catholic church had been built, and the Methodist Church (among others) was meeting in the old Masonic hall, Rolla was not a very saintly place as thus described by Editor Walker in the *Rolla Express* issue of April 4, 1863:

> **"In common conversation abroad, in fact, from observation at home, it would seem that Rolla is a God-forgotten and dangerous place. In some degree this must be acknowledged. A place that has improved so rapidly (built so rapidly) must inevitably have been attended with vice. The "necessary evils" attending a war (for evils are deemed necessary by a majority of warriors) like that in which we are involved seem to overshadow the land with immorality and lay waste all that is good. But happily, for the redemption of this distracted village, there are some good citizens here, though greatly in the minority — Christians who are laboring, as it would seem, for the GOOD among a crazy, thoughtless people, well nigh in the valley and shadow of death. Surely a great revival must take place in Rolla *soon*. Religion, education, and all that tends to make beings industrious, virtuous and happy is laid aside by the almost innumerable throng of ungodly people, who cluster around dram shops and the card table to drink deep of liquid fire, that will, alas, consume them. Oh, that a flaming two-edged sword might sever the devil and his emissaries from would-be righteous people."**

The "revival" the editor wished for was not long in coming, we learn from this first-hand account by the Rev. Robert R. Witten, the third regular Rolla pastor:

> **"I was next (1863) sent to the Rolla circuit . . . This year, as usual, I had plenty of hard work and hard fare, but I stuck to them to the end and left the field better than it was when I went to it. A lot had been procured by my predecessor, Rev. Mr. Beggs, and I at once commenced the erection of the house of worship . . . Rolla was then an important military post and was flooded with soldiers and refugees.**
>
> **"I held a meeting (revival) in Rolla, aided by Rev. A. N. Cave, Chaplain of the 23rd Missouri Infantry, which resulted in the conversion of 150 souls. The work in the country (outside Rolla) was equally prosperous, notwithstanding the country was full of bushwhackers and two of our brethren were brutally murdered."**

First Church Cost $8,000

The original "brick church" as its outlines can still be traced, measured 39 feet (north-south) by 53 feet, outside brick lines. Added to the front (east) was the tower vestibule room, 5 by 13 feet.

We can assume that the Rev. Stanford Ing, upon returning to Rolla as pastor in 1864 continued construction on the church. It is built of locally burned brick. Local dolomite and "cotton rock" quarries furnished the stone; local forests provided the framing timber. Soldiers and local workmen did the actual work under a building committee consisting of Edmund W. Bishop, Charles P. Walker and E. Q. James (former county treasurer). The Goodspeed History of Phelps County gives the aggregate cost of the church then built at $8000.00.

In 1865, Mr. Ing became District Superintendent of the Rolla district, and continued to reside in Rolla until 1870. It was under the pastorate of the Rev. Alexander N. Fields (1865-66) that the brick church was practically completed. The building was then used as a place in which to serve meals to the soldiers or to refugees who flocked to Rolla by hundreds to escape persecution or death at the hands of the roving guerrilla bands that infested South Central Missouri. The church was also used for temporary homes for families burned out in the great Rolla fire of June 21, 1865. Being the only house of worship available, generally, to Rolla residents, this church for a decade or so became a sort of public meeting hall used by several other churches as well as by the schools on occasion.

With the end of the Civil War, the attention of the church and town turned to education. When the Rev. Dr. and Mrs. James C. H. Hobbs arrived as pastor in 1866, there was still no public school. A subscription school was soon opened, with parents paying the teacher's salary. Together with church pillars like Mr. and Mrs. A. S. Long, Dr. Hobbs got the idea that Rolla should have a college. In due time Rolla College was formally organized by the Phelps County Circuit court. Subjects taught were those of the last two years of high school. The college must have been supported largely by student tuition, though in the beginning it was financed by private citizens, and members and friends of the church. It remained open through 1868.

How First Hymn Books Were Purchased

It was during the year 1866-67 that the Frisco railroad was extended west from Rolla to Arlington. The son of Dr. Hobbs recalls that, in order to procure church hymn books, his father arranged for a railroad excursion to Arlington, the price of the round trip covering also the cost of a Methodist hymnal. For many years Rolla Methodists sang from these books inscribed as a "souvenir" of that trip.

By 1869, there were four Protestant churches in Rolla—Baptist, Christian, Methodist, and Presbyterian, who united that year for Thanksgiving Day services—morning at the new Presbyterian church and evening at the Methodist Church. The Baptists and Christians still met in the Masonic Hall.

The Rolla Methodist churchwomen early established a tradition of good works and money-raising projects for the benefit of the church. On June 9, 1869, the Ladies' Aid gave a spectacular "Strawberry Festival" at Shaw's Hall for benefit of the Sunday School, and another was held in 1870 in Lowell's Railroad Dining room, proceeds totalling $99.00. At another of these Ladies' Aid affairs, the ladies raised $200.00 and with some of it bought an overcoat for the Rev. R. R. Pierce (pastor 1871-73) and a cloak for his wife. The entire town of Rolla went to concerts whenever staged. One of their many concerts was staged September 5, 1869, with the proceeds used to pay off the church debt.

In 1871, the town realized its dream of a college, when the Missouri School of Mines was established. On November 6, 1871, the school was dedicated, with the exercises and addresses held in the Methodist Church. Students at the school quickly became active in the life of the church. In 1876, according to the *Rolla Express*, the students put on a three-part play *"Laila"* for the benefit of the Methodist Church spire fund. (The old bell tower had been wrecked earlier in a severe thunderstorm, and the old bell cracked). Such activities were characteristic of the School of Mines students in the 1871-1890 era.

The Rev. I. J. K. Lunbeck, who served twice as Rolla's pastor (1874-1875 and 1887-91), especially appealed to the Rolla church, because his wife, nee Sarah Fort, was next younger sister of Mrs. Albert S. Long, who was for so many years, with her husband, "mother and father" of the Rolla church.

Rolla's Other Methodist Churches

Although the history of the Rolla Methodist Church which has been continuous for the past 100 years is the story of the "north" church, its story would not be complete without mentioning its two sister churches, Rolla Second Church and the South Methodist Church. Rolla Second Church (colored) was organized about 1866, with the Rev. Peter Elkins as its first pastor. By 1888 when Goodspeed's

History was written, they had a membership of 80 and a church valued at about $800. As Elkins Chapel, this church is still active almost a century later. The South Methodist church became part of our present congregation in 1890.

Activity in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South in this area possibly precedes that of the "north." In the Rolla area, and especially at Newburg and Maramec Spring, there were "south" Methodist families who received visits from the southern circuit riders dating back to 1845. After Union troops occupied Rolla in 1861, it was imprudent to be connected with any south institution, church or otherwise. Following effective Rebel raids on Union military wagon trains in the area, suspicion fell upon some of the leading South church families, with the result that they were imprisoned in their own homes. These conditions account readily for the collapse and inactivity of the South church during Civil War days.

It was not until 1869 or 1870 that South Methodists around Rolla dared show themselves. Then, at Rolla and St. James, they renewed activity, feebly at first, then more intensely in the early 1880's. There came to be two preaching circuits in the Rolla area, the St. James Circuit and the Rolla circuit, with 97 members, two church buildings worth $2,500., and a Sunday School with seven teachers and forty pupils. Rolla church had no formal church society after 1890, but did build a memorable brick church in 1881 where the First Christian Church now stands.

Western Conservatory of Music

Perhaps the greatest and best remembered contribution of the South Church to the community was the creation of the Western Conservatory of Music in 1882. The Conservatory was a going Rolla institution until late 1888 or 1889 when it was moved away from Rolla. From the date of opening, there was initiated an intense program of musical training in piano, organ, all stringed and band instruments, and voice. No graduate was more active or prominent in the conservatory and its continuing train of benefits than was John W. Scott, for sixty years thereafter Rolla's druggist, bandmaster, and choir director. For years after the conservatory closed, the graduates in one way or another gave to Rolla literally hundreds of community concerts, church choirs, concerts and such.

The activity and use of the South Church building by Western Conservatory and consequent overexpansion undoubtedly hurt the cause of that church. After the conservatory moved from Rolla, the church society itself slumped. Its pioneer members died or moved. The church building finally burned, and the lots were sold to the Christian Church. With home and membership so depleted, the remaining members joined other Rolla churches, a goodly number with Rolla's north Methodist church. Among them was the late probate Judge John B. Scott, so long the teacher of the Methodist Men's Bible Class.

The first of the four remodelings of the original Methodist Church building was done in the 1894-98 period. The north wall was set outward to the edge of the sidewalk, and the memorial stained glass windows, still intact in today's Fellowship Hall, were installed. Inside, the pulpit and choir arrangements were changed, as were Sunday School and Epworth League rooms, to accommodate an expanding congregation.

In 1900, the annual conference again assigned to Rolla the Rev. and Mrs. Francis S. Beggs, who in 1861-62 had first organized the Rolla Methodist Church. The Beggs were so greatly loved and respected, were so effective in their work and

ministry, that the church prospered greatly for the five years they served here in their second pastorate. The graves of both Mr. and Mrs. Beggs are in the Rolla cemetery.

The Epworth League and young people's activities held the spotlight during the four-year pastorate of the Rev. Thomas P. Shaffer, who came to Rolla in 1906, fresh from the halls of De Pauw University. He was followed by the Rev. (Dr.) George Hunt (1910-13) and the Rev. A. M. Dixon, 1914. Doctor Hunt is remembered by parishioners of that day as a gentle, scholarly man, who was passionately fond of birds and nature.

It was during the eight-year pastorate (1915-23) of the Rev. and Mrs. Claude Simpson Hanby that the church undertook what was perhaps its most ambitious program. Feeling that the technical program in the School of Mines offered little to direct student thought toward things religious, Mr. Hanby saw a vision of what the church might do. Through the Wesley Foundation, aid could be had for a church-student program which would provide entertainment, culture, refinement and religious instruction and thinking.

Social and Sunday School Room Needed

The biggest obstacle to such a program was an inadequate church plant. At that time, there were no social rooms and no kitchen. The old auditorium and its basement offered the only available room for Sunday School classes. Holding classes all in the same room, one class competing with the others, was little short of bedlam.

The first step was a reorganization of the use of church space, with the children's department moved to the basement. In the auditorium the floor itself was altered so as to slope to the front, and a new Kilgen air pipe organ installed to replace the double manual foot pedal, hand blown bellows affair which had been in use for many years.

The next phase was the construction of social and Sunday School rooms. This, the second addition to the original church, occupied the remainder of the building lot space west of the original building and measured 32 by 63 feet. A kitchen was walled off across the back 12 feet, and the front section was designed for a church parlor. A gallery-type second floor was fitted for children's classes. (The space open from first floor to ceiling level proved hard to heat and wasteful of second floor space, so it was later made into a full second floor). It has been reported that the social room plant was constructed at a cost of around $15,000. and the Kilgen organ purchased for $2500. The full record of financing is not available. There were generous gifts from members, from the Carnegie Foundation, and the National Board of Home Missions and Church Extension.

With the church plant renovated, Mr. Hanby and his church were ready to launch his student program. There was a special Sunday School class named "The Methodist Engineers," who also had a special place in the Epworth League. The program then expanded to include a series of talks or lectures by prominent and famous men. The MSM faculty became interested, and joined with the church in bringing these men to Rolla to talk to the students.

This evolved into a regular monthly event, with an evening banquet at the church, followed by lectures in the church auditorium or in Parker Hall auditorium. A group of MSM faculty members and interested laymen assumed special sponsorship for these programs. This group included Profs. George R. Dean, Leon E. Woodman, William DeGarmo Turner, Israel H. Lovett, Martin H. Thornberry,

and Joe B. Butler, who served his church in so many capacities, including many years as district lay leader.

One facet of the student activities was the "Fun and Frolic" program. A series of moving pictures were shown at the church, with the proceeds going to help sustain the Methodist Engineer program. At about the same time, the church sponsored a series of plays which were produced, acted, and often written by members of the church. Dramas such as "Meg and the Silver Bullet" and "The Enchanted Lantern" written by Dr. L. E. Woodman, physics department chairman and church organist, will ever be remembered by those who saw them.

Campaign for Church Fund

By the autumn of 1923, this program had progressed to the point that plans were formulated for the building of a new church structure on the south end of the building lot and a new parsonage at the northeast corner of 8th and Main. When an earlier pledge of a gift of $100,000 from the Board of Home Missions and Church Extension failed to materialize, a drive was made to raise the funds otherwise. In a local drive, Rolla churchmen received donations and pledges totalling $50,000, which was then to be matched by the Home Missions Board. The Wesley Foundation bought the south half of the block on which the church stood and removed the old parsonage in preparation for the new church building.

In the meantime, the financial picture changed drastically. The $50,000 fund the church members thought they had raised was "discounted" by the Home Missions Board agent to total only $42,000. Besides this, there was a note of some $6,000 which had already been made for previous church improvements.

Soon after this development matured, the pastor left Rolla. Many donors who had signed large pledges now wrote for cancellation of their pledges. That was the end of the building program. The Rev. Clarence P. Mills filled out the unexpired assignment of Mr. Hanby.

Financial Problems to Be Solved

When the Rev. Harry Hunter and his wife arrived in Rolla at the beginning of the 1924-25 conference year, he faced many problems. The prestige and morale of the Methodist church and Wesley Foundation had fallen with the collapse of their ambitious building program. There were financial problems to be solved — the Wesley Foundation debt, and the building of a new parsonage to replace the original which had been moved away prematurely in anticipation of the proposed building plan.

The most pressing financial problems were finally disposed of thus: The Wesley Foundation gave the church trustees clear title to the south half (lots 3 and 4) of Block 34, the church block. On this property the trustees built a $10,000 parsonage, toward which the Board of Home Missions made a loan of $3,500.

Mr. Hunter wisely continued the "Fun and Frolic" program, good medicine for the slump the church had suffered. Affable and gregarious, "Harry and Helen" as they were affectionately called by their congregation, enlarged and consolidated the circle of influence of the church.

It was during the Hunters' first two or three years that they began a custom which lasted almost thirty years. For many years, until the fall of 1954, each Thanksgiving a cooperative dinner was served at the church. Those who attended shared in the cost of the turkey, each bringing along part of the "trimmings."

Students at the School of Mines, stranded in town for the holidays, were special church guests.

The Rev. Harry Hunter served two years as pastor, the first 1924-28, and the second 1932-43. The combined terms constitute the longest service (15 years) any Rolla Methodist pastor contributed. Both Mr. and Mrs. Hunter have passed away, and their cremated ashes are interred on the church building lot.

The five years between the two pastorates of Mr. Hunter were bridged by the pastorate of the Rev. Harry R. Osborn (1928-32). Perhaps an outstanding achievement during that era was the aid given by this church in starting a "Springfield Laymen's Association" which was active for many years, Dr. C. V. Mann, Rolla, being the first president.

Debts Paid in Full

When the Hunters returned to Rolla in the fall of 1932 for their second pastorate, they carried on much the same church program as before. During this time, the debts incurred by all the Wesley Foundation proceedings and the building of the parsonage were paid in full. A number of plant improvements were then planned and carried out: (1) the open area of the second floor of Sunday School rooms was enclosed to provide considerable extra space; (2) a better heating plant was installed, more suitably heating both auditorium and Sunday School rooms; (3) many improvements were added in the kitchen facilities; (4) a wooden floor was laid over the concrete slab floor of the Sunday School room and kitchen, and (5) the interior of the auditorium was repapered. The "fun and frolic" program was continued, and friendly and fruitful relations were continued with the School of Mines students.

It was during the second pastorate of the Hunters that the church was, for the second time in its history, called upon to serve as a home church for soldiers. During the building of Fort Leonard Wood, and its subsequent use by the army, the church responded to the opportunity to serve the influx of transient construction and service people. The Rev. Joseph Fulkerson, who followed the Hunters, served only the one war year of 1943-44.

The seven-year pastorate of the Rev. Ralph H. Hicks took the Rolla church through the final war years and the postwar adjustment years when the town bulged with returning servicemen and GI students attending the School of Mines. Mr. Hicks was director of the newly activated Wesley Foundation, the group receiving some small financial support from the conference. Both Mr. and Mrs. Hicks were much interested in youth, and their ministry played an important part in the lives of many MSM students and young ex-servicemen as well as the young people of church families.

The Rev. Walter Dulany Niles (1951-57) was pastor of the church in an era in which the church was again called on to minister to the servicemen at the reactivated Fort Leonard Wood during the Korean War, and later to the postwar boom of students at MSM. A part-time Wesley Foundation director was hired during the latter years to help with increased responsibilities.

In 1956, the church realized one of its fondest dreams—that of a new church sanctuary addition, abutting the old church to the south. The church parsonage was moved to a lot across the street east of the church, and was used for Sunday School classes during the construction of the new church. A new electric organ was purchased to replace the old Kilgen pipe organ.

Biggest Membership Increase

It was during this six-year period, too, that the church made its largest single increase in membership, from 450 in 1951 to 720 in 1957. To accommodate the large crowds desiring to attend services, a schedule of two Sunday morning services was inaugurated.

The Rev. Lee F. Soxman succeeded Mr. Niles when conference met in May, 1957. He and Mrs. Soxman moved into the newly redecorated parsonage across the street from the church. During his pastorate the church continued to grow and prosper, and it was a saddened congregation which saw their pastor incapacitated by a stroke just a few weeks before conference in 1959.

When Mr. Soxman left Rolla for at least temporary retirement from the ministry, the Rev. Elbridge W. Bartley, Jr., was assigned to the Rolla church. Plans which were already in the making for the purchase of the Koch property across the street (adjoining the parsonage) for a Wesley Foundation house came to fruition during the following summer. The Rev. Robert Barefield served the first year as full-time director of Wesley Foundation, and was succeeded in 1960 by the Rev. Thomas Hoffman, who also served during the summer as youth director of the local church.

Thus the Rolla First Methodist Church has completed its first 100 years. It is interesting to note that the influence of several of the pioneer families who figured so prominently in the early days is being felt even today, not only as a result of their own contributions to the church through the years, but also through their descendants, who are today members of our church.

There are only two families of charter members still represented in our church in 1961. They are the Albert S. Long family, and Mrs. Emma Rueh, daughter of Charles Walker, who was probably a charter member.

Descendants of Early Preachers

Descendants of some of the early preachers are still in our church. The Rev. Lewis Frank Walden, pastor of the church in 1869-70, was the grandfather of the late Mrs. Clyde Carney, and the great grandfather of Mrs. Gordon Guinnup. William Pierce, the son of the Rev. R. R. Pierce, pastor in 1871-73, was remembered here for many years for his magnificient bass voice and musical talent. He was the father of Mrs. Harry Witt, and the grandfather of Mrs. Charles Burns. Mrs. W. T. Denison, the widow of the Rev. C. S. Hanby, former pastor, is still a member of the Mispah Sunday School class, which she taught when it was first organized as the Berean Class many years ago.

Two pioneer Methodist families, the Scotts and Sappenfields, are represented in our church today in the person of Mrs. Olive Morris, our church organist. Mrs. Morris' paternal grandparents, the Rev. and Mrs. James H. Scott, came to Rolla in 1871. It was their son, John W., father of Olive, who was for many years choir director and a faithful member of the choir until just a few months before his death in 1950. The late Mrs. George Dean, who served the church in many and varied ways for so many years, was also a daughter of the Scotts. Her history of the church, written in 1938-39, has served as a valuable reference in the writing of this centennial history.

The Rev. and Mrs. Louis C. Sappenfield, parents of Eula Garst and grandparents of Olive Morris, came to Rolla in April of 1888 as District Superintendent of the Rolla district. Two of their other daughters, Mrs. C. M. Knapp (Olive) and the

late Mrs. John Scott (Stella) are especially remembered for their long service in the Sunday School department.

This history is too brief to list the many faithful workers in all areas of the church who have kept the church growing in grace and numbers the past hundred years —

The Sunday School teachers, who have numbered in the hundreds since the Sunday School was first opened in 1862;

The Woman's Society of Christian Service, which has gone through several name changes since its beginning as a Civil War Ladies' Aid, but has remained ever the same in spirit and goals;

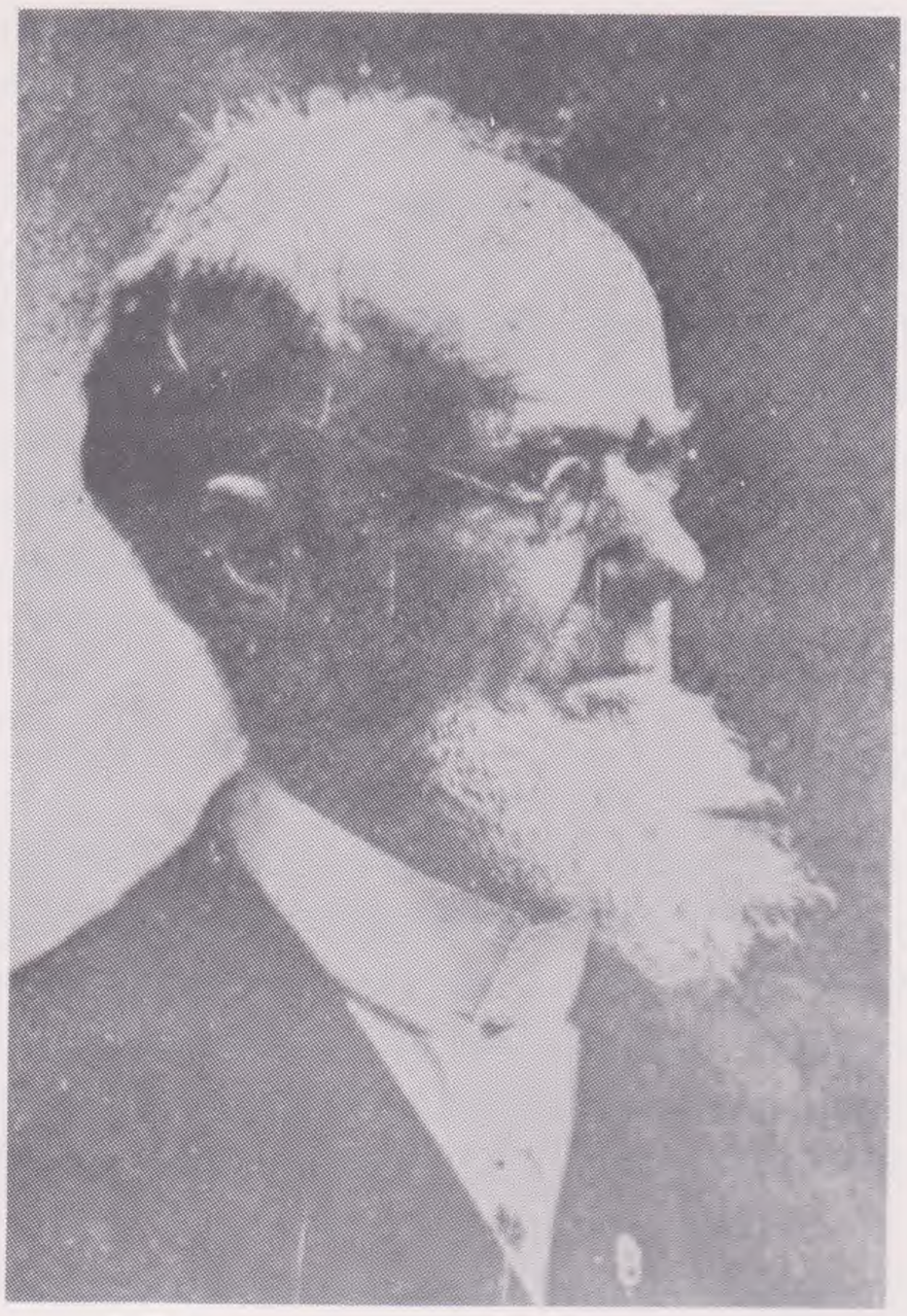
The music ministry, always an important factor in the worship service of our church;

The trustees, the stewards, the commissions . . . . the hundreds of unnamed Christians, whose vision, dedication, talent, labor and contributions have brought us to this centennial celebration.

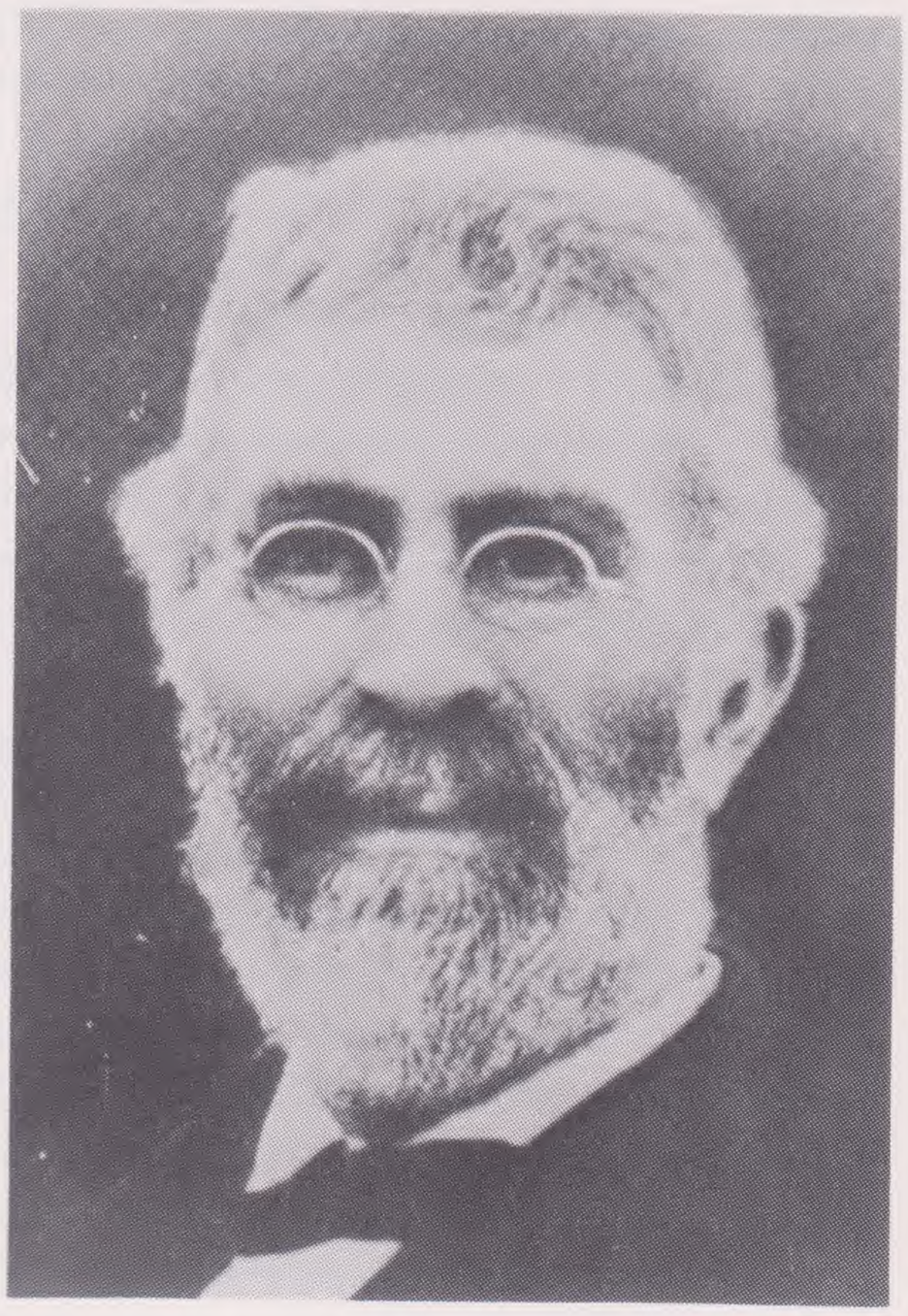
Some vivid contrasts can be drawn between the original church and our church today. The original church was organized with 16 members; now there are more than 850 on our rolls. Then the circuit riders preached before a handful of people in the old Masonic building or court house; now our minister must hold two services each Sunday in our own large, modern building.

The original group would be lost in all of today's membership, if all were to be assembled at one time and place. What would they think of each other — these two groups — if by any chance they could meet?

Earliest Available Picture of Methodist Parsonage and Church.



Rev. Robert R. Witten
Pastor, 1863-64



Albert Snyder Long
Pillar of North Methodism

Centennial Postscript

The First United Methodist Church

Rolla Missouri

23 May 1976

The First United Methodist Church of Rolla celebrated its centennial in 1961. For that event, Mrs. J. Kent (Winona) Roberts prepared an adaptation of "A Partial History of the Methodist Church at Rolla, Missouri," written by Bonita H. Mann and Clair V. Mann in 1956. The current pages are a resumé of the church's record during the years since its centennial.

Four pastors have served the Rolla congregation during these fifteen years: Elbridge W. Bartley, George W. Heslar, Marvin Fortel, and Forrest L. Standard. In addition, five directors of the Wesley Foundation have served as associates to the pastors: Robert S. Barefield, Thomas G. Hoffman, W. Fred Lamar, Thomas E. Nagle and Clayton L. Smith.

These men have guided a congregation and its youthful auxiliary during an interval in which institutional stability and impact of outreach rather than exceptional statistical growth have been notable characteristics.

Twenty Years of Church Building

The present plant of First Church is the physical embodiment of these developments. The sanctuary, constructed during the pastorate of Walter D. Niles (1951-

1957), and the institutional building reconstructed at the same time from the original sanctuary and church school classrooms (by that time almost a century old), comprise the facilities of the current church in all of its central functions. Three other properties serve corollary purposes: the parsonage, originally located on the "church block" and moved in 1956 east across Main Street from the church; the Koch house, purchased by the church in 1960 and used as the principal facility of the Wesley Foundation for more than a decade; and the current Wesley house directly south of the church, property purchased from Mrs. Charles (Colonel) Woods in 1968. The removal of the Foundation from the Koch house to its present home released that structure for use by church school classes and a number of other church and community functions.

A Church at Work

This modern church plant cost a great deal of money; the debts entailed were substantial. The congregation of First Church has during the past fifteen years raised, borrowed, spent and retired not only the $350,000 cost of the 1955-56 construction program: it has also invested and retired the $30,000 cost of the Koch property, invested and nearly retired its $30,000 share in the purchase of the Woods property (the Missouri Conference contributed a similar sum), and raised and spent some $8,000 in remodeling the parsonage.

These very considerable commitments have been undertaken by a congregation of, on balance, conspicuously middle income families in a community of modest resources. In 1961 the church rolls recorded about 850 active and contributing members, that is, about 340 families. After reaching a record exceeding 900 in the late 1960s the roll has now declined to 838, paralleling national trends of the United Methodist Church. But the financial statements of the church record a substantially different picture. First Church's 1961 operating budget was somewhat in excess of $37,000 and the annual debt (building fund) commitments were about $15,000. The 1976 operating budget exceeds $81,000. The debt of the 1955-56 construction has been retired, and the remaining debt on the last of the properties, the Woods house, has been reduced to a small payment which should find First Church free of all encumbrance in late 1977.

Although the successful execution of those undertakings is clearly a demonstration of united congregational effort, no discussion of the building program would be complete without recognition of the leading role assumed by J. Nean White. As chairman of the Commission on Stewardship and Finance (now the Finance Committee) Mr. White was the principal initiator, planner and supervisor of all of these projects. His meticulously prepared and executed fiscal policies resulted in consistent "on-time" fulfillment of these financial obligations. Even after many years his methodical bookkeeping provides the reader with clear and precise un 'erstanding of the budgetary means and procedures he employed. In addition, he presented a monthly balance sheet equating the congregation's assets and liabilities: in October, 1969, shortly before his passing, he estimated the church's assets at more than half a million dollars, including an evaluation of "membership equity" (constantly rising as the debts were paid) at $450,000. Today, as the debt approaches zero and as property values continue their sharp advance, the membership equity might justifiably be estimated at $600,000 or more.

During these same fifteen years the congregation has doubled the pastor's salary, provided a substantial budget for an Educational Assistant, almost tripled the salaries of the church secretary and custodian, and provided annual sums for the choir director

and organist, both of whom were for many years granted only minor annual honorariums.

The Wesley Foundation

On the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Wesley Foundation and the dedication of the Curtis L. Wilson Chapel on the 28th of October, 1973, Winona Roberts prepared a history of the organization from its founding in 1923. Aptly, she characterized the foundation's early history as ". . . one of ups and downs, over-enthusiasm, overextension of finances, defeat, retreat, re-evaluation and finally renewal and continuing progress." Her comments for those 1973 events were accurate in historical fact and in anticipation as well. After 39 years of informal leadership by a long list of dedicated and selfless pastors and pastor's wives and lay volunteers, the Foundation, financed by First Church, employed in 1959 its first full time director, Robert S. Barefield. Its second, Thomas G. Hoffman, served from 1960 to 1965. During their directorships were established the programs which have been ever since the basis of much of the youth work in the church. From the casual institution of earlier years, Wesley emerged as a viable day-by-day center of many youth activities. This laudable achievement was made possible in part by the acquisition of the facilities mentioned, but much more by the dedication of these men (and their loyal wives) to the welfare of the young people of First Church and the campus community. Evaluation of such intangible influences is at best difficult, but it is safe to assume that during those years hundreds of young people sought and found personal counseling that may guide them all their lives. Moreover, group functions, religious, social and recreational in nature, provided a much needed church oriented life for young people who, away from home, had few such opportunities elsewhere.

The Reverend W. Fred Lamar served as director from 1965 until 1974 except for one year, 1971-72, during which he completed study for a doctoral degree. The Reverend Thomas Nagle served as interim director during that year. Both pursued a broadening of Wesley functions. Dr. Lamar viewed his work as that of "campus minister," a title employed in 1969 when the Foundation joined the Campus Christian Fellowship under the United Ministries in Higher Education. Dr. Lamar's program included, for example, frequent extended home and church work projects in inner city areas, and some major reconstruction of sanitary and electrical services in public housing. In addition, he was a frequent leader in campus projects not immediately associated with Wesley. The breadth of appeal in such social service and ecumenical programs was apparent; Wesley activities both at the house and elsewhere drew large followings of young people not necessarily associated with First Church or the Foundation.

The directorship passed in the fall of 1974 to the Reverend Clayton L. Smith, appointed to the Foundation and the United Ministries in Higher Education by Bishop Robert E. Goodrich. Under his supervision the Foundation has emphasized more traditional roles of youth worship, spiritual growth, recreation and social affairs and above all, assistance to individual young people. A number of established work projects and social programs have been continued; during 1975, for example, Reverend Smith as Protestant Chaplain to the United Ministries (Methodist, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic) has collaborated with the Gamma Alpha Delta service fraternity and the Newman Center in carrying out numerous "social engineering" projects in distressed areas of St. Louis and elsewhere in Missouri. During 1975 alone over 700 students contributed some 10,000 man hours of voluntary service to those

in need. Nonetheless, the unique, vital service of the Foundation and its current director is its student centered functions, through Wesley and its ecumenical outreach.

A Living Church

Predictable and conventional vicissitudes have arisen during the past 15 years. For example, Board minutes and Commission reports are replete with references to the "need for teachers" for the church school classes and programs, and the provision of adequate facilities for them. Concern often appears that too few of the congregation share in the work of either church or church school. At the same time there is evidence of measurable achievement. The church school enrollment apparently reached a peak of about 700 during the late 1960s, with an average attendance exceeding 300. In 1961 an intensive weeklong District Christian Worker's School provided instruction sessions shared by teachers at all levels, and the Church Worker's School of September, 1964, provided distinguished adult teacher training by none other than retired Bishop Ivan Lee Holt.

The commissions, WSCS, Methodist Men and special committees accepted a broad spectrum of responsibilities: preparation of communion services, International Fellowship dinners, assistance to Elkins Chapel (two difficult exterior paintings and a $6,000 building rehabilitation by the Methodist Men), a search for adequate parking space adjacent to the church block (a matter settled vicariously by the University's construction of a parking lot on the Breur property north of the church), an attempt to provide for and employ an assistant pastor, sponsorship of the "Spiritual Life Mission" in April of 1965, and the "New Life Mission" of April, 1974.

The four pastors of the interval have brought to the pulpit and ministry the array of varied capacities and concerns with which Methodist congregations are familiar; vigorous leadership, distinguished scholarship, personal devotion to the personal welfare of young and old, good humor, patience and forbearance . . . in sum, serving the Faith whether in purposes lofty or pedestrian. For example, Elbridge Bartley's report of record attendance at communion services, his interception of a would-be thief in the sanctuary, and a humorous assurance to the Board that his illness of late 1963 was definitely only temporary. Or, George Heslar's thoughtful analysis of the restructured (1968) United Methodist Church and his urgent encouragement of the "Quadrennial Program" that sought the more immediate involvement of all age groups in the pursuit of Methodist scholarship. Or, Marvin Fortell's frequent and spirited drives to instill new life in the young people's programs. And finally, the painstaking efforts of Forrest Standard to bridge the disparities of interest in a congregation so long isolated from national collisions, but now beset by obvious yet puzzling and often melancholy social thickets through which emerges no simple or clearly discernible path.

Summing Up

Fifteen years have now been added to the Centennial record of First Church. Material progress is clearly visible in much of that record: the stature of Christian worship which First Church may achieve will, as always, be the ultimate test of its true success.

OUR MINISTERS
First Methodist Church
ROLLA, MISSOURI

MINISTER	YEARS SERVICE
William Sellers	1861
Frances S. Beggs	1861 — 1862
Robert R. Witten	1863
Stanford Ing	1864
Alex N. Fields	1865 — 1866
J. C. H. Hobbs	1867
J. Laughran	1868
L. F. Walden	1869 — 1870
S. J. Bostrick	1870 — 1871
J. W. Johnson	1871 (part)
R. R. Pierce	1871 — 1873
N. B. Cassavant	1873 (part)
I. J. K. Lunbeck	1874 — 1875
S. H. Mortland	1875
J. B. Daniel	1877 — 1878
J. B. Lee	1879 — 1880
J. Hallock	1881
James Pine	1882 — 1883
B. F. Poole	1884 — 1886
I. J. K. Lunbeck	1887 — 1891
G. T. Ashley	1892 — 1893
A. D. Ball	1894 — 1898
H. B. Foster	1899
Francis Beggs	1900 — 1905
T. P. Shaffer	1906 — 1910
George Hunt	1910 — 1913
A. M. Dixon	1914
Claude S. Hanby	1915 — 1922
C. P. Mills	1922 — 1923
Harry P. Hunter	1923 — 1928
Harry R. Osborn	1928 — 1932
Harry P. Hunter	1932 — 1942
Joseph Fulkerson	1943 — 1944
Ralph H. Hicks	1944 — 1951
Walter D. Niles	1951 — 1957
Lee Soxman	1957 — 1959
Elbridge W. Bartley, Jr.	1959 — 1966
George W. Heslar	1966 — 1970
Marvin Fortel	1970 — 1973
Forrest L. Standard	1973

Remembrance and Hope

All praise to Thee, our God, whose vision splendid
Caught fire in humble hearts long years ago,
And made a triumph of the century now ended:
A hundred years to love and serve and grow!

Proudly we turn the pages of the story
So bravely written by the deeds of men
Who loved Thy Church, O God, and sought Thy glory:
O grant to us such faith as they had then!

We garner in our hearts the sacred treasure
Of memories of days that now are gone;
We look back through the years with pride and pleasure,
And seek for grace and strength to follow on.

We know not what the coming years may send us,
We only know that we must rise and build;
And so we pray Thy Spirit may attend us,
That dreams both old and new may be fulfilled!

— George W. Heslar

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF ROLLA, MISSOURI

1976-1984

By Elizabeth Richards

The years between this congregation's centennial, 1961, and the present year, 1984, the Bicentennial of Methodism in the United States, have been years of growth in numbers and increased service and inspiration to members, youth and the community. There is a stable core of the congregation. To quote the Rev. George Heslar's poem, "Remembrance and Hope," which is on the back cover of "The Centennial of Methodism in Rolla, Missouri, 1861-1961,"

"We know not what the coming years may send us
We only know that we must rise and build--"

The Rev. Ferris Norton followed the Rev. Forrest Standard in 1976. Under his guidance, the congregation assumed the added responsibility of the purchase of a new parsonage located at 1312 Whitney Lane, away from the church grounds. The appearance of the sanctuary was enhanced by new paint and the making of banners. New emphasis was placed on the youth program with the coming of Matt and Marta Knight as directors of relational education. Increased counseling by the pastor and programs such as marriage enrichment gave emphasis to personal relationships. Dr. Norton was forced to discontinue his ministry in Rolla because of failing health.

The Rev. Willard Spencer and his family arrived in Rolla in January 1979 on a very cold day, but a very warm welcome by the congregation belied the weather. The Rev. Spencer, in his ministry, stressed the fulfillment of our pledges to apportionments, the setting of goals, priorities, evaluation of programs and leadership. Job descriptions were written which have helped the staff and those individuals having responsibility for various groups. Dial-a-Prayer, an outreach program, was developed in 1980 and continues. Another service to the local needy is the food pantry. Help, through sharing, for the larger community is through the Bishop's Convocation each year.

In 1982, a dream was fulfilled with the coming of an assistant pastor, the Rev. Peggy Goers. She is also an inspiring worker with youth, filling the vacancy created when Matt and Marta Knight departed.

Music, as an aid to worship, was enhanced with the purchase of a Rogers organ in 1980. The Woodman Bells were dedicated in 1982. These beautiful hand bells were given as a gift by Ellen Woodman Doll, in memory of her parents, Dr. and Mrs. L.E. Woodman. Dr. Woodman was organist for this church for many years.

The Rev. David Bennett followed the Rev. Clayton Smith as the director of the Wesley Foundation. Support and inspiration to individual students continues. Outreach to others is as varied as cutting and delivery of firewood to the elderly and needy in the local area, and aid in building a clean water supply for the Kuna Indians in Panama. These programs illustrate the wide-ranging help given by Wesley Foundation on its own and as a member of Gamma Alpha Delta, University of Missouri-Rolla service fraternity.

Worship interest and appreciation of this church's history has been stimulated by "Old Sanctuary Days" and the display of keepsakes under the leadership of Mr. Spencer.

As a permanent remembrance of the Bicentennial of Methodism in America, this congregation has placed a stained glass Bicentennial Window in the east wall of the narthex. Just to the right of the window is a large display plaque with the names and dates of ministry to this congregation of all of the church's pastors. The window, which portrays the Bicentennial motif of the stylized circuit rider carrying the cross, was made and given to the church by J. Kent Roberts, chairman of the Bicentennial Committee.

In June 1984, the Rev. Robert Morrison became pastor of this church and the Rev. Paul Powell became director of Wesley Foundation.

The First United Methodist Church of Rolla is facing the '80s and the third century of the Methodist Church in America with a litany of sharing, carying and helping groups, a growing church school department, church buildings in good order, and congregational spirit high and flexible.

"One God -- Many Expressions" could well be our motto.

THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

THE LOCAL CHURCH
First United Methodist Church 573
803 Main Street, Rolla, MO 65401 (~~314~~) 364-3980

HISTORY:

Hand out History of Church - 1961 & 1976
Founded in 1861 - Hard to imagine conditions in Rolla
Same year that Rolla received its charter
Methodist church at Maramec Iron Works, September 13, 1849
Maramec charge and circuit included Rolla
Rolla-Maramec Charge - 1860
Rev. Sanford Ing preached in Rolla in May, 1860.
Seems to be no recorded date of founding of Rolla Church.
Rev. William Sellers stationed in Rolla in 1861.
Rev. Francis S. Beggs assigned to Rolla-Maramec circuit for 1861-62.
Deed for two lots (North half of block), June 4, 1861

First Sunday School organized in June, 1862.
Probably met in Court House then in Masonic building.

First church building - 1863 - part of present facilities.
39 ft x 53 ft - outside brick lines - $8,000
Community Service
Army mess hall
Housing for war refugees
Housing for families burned out in fire of 1865
Public meeting place
Other churches

This was a "North Church" (Methodist Episcopal Church)

Rolla Second Methodist Church (colored)
Rev. Peter Elkins - Elkins Chapel
Ceased operation in 1980 or 81.

"South Church" (Methodist Episcopal Church, South)
Probably active around in the area earlier than North church
1881 - Built church at SE corner of intersection of 8th & Main
Sponsored Western Conservatory of Music, 1882 - 1888 or 9
1890 - Church burned - lots sold the Christian Church
Members came to the North church.

Church Building Expanded:
1894-98 - North wall moved out - Stained glass added there
1915-23 - Sanctuary re-oriented
Kilgen pipe organ
Social and Sunday School rooms on the West (2 story)
Kitchen and parlor
1932 - Improvements and remodeling
1956 - New sanctuary, remodeled fellowship hall and Sunday School rooms. Electric organ.
Parsonage moved across Main Street
1960 - Koch property (red brick) purchased for Wesley Found.
1968 - Wood's property purchased for Wesley Foundation and extensive remodeling done.

Building Programs:

1984 - Building Needs Committee formed.
DECIDED TO REMAIN "DOWNTOWN AND CLOSED TO UMR."

1985 - Building Committee authorized and Building Fund established

1986 - A Long Range Plan approved, fund raising started, detailed plans prepared. Plan called for:
1. Expanded office, narthex, and educational space.
2. Additional Education Building parallel to Sanctuary.
3. Complete remodeling of Fellowship Hall area.

1988 - Contract awarded for construction of Part 1. Total cost $694,884.

1989 - Construction complete with mortgage of $369,268 which was paid off in Spring of 1996.

1995 - Ritz theater and old Chevrolet garage building on Rolla Street became available at a bargain price of $144,000 and was purchased. A Building Needs committee was appointed.

1996 - A new Building Committee appointed, a new plan developed with architect and approved for:
1. Demolition of two buildings on Rolla Street.
2. Multipurpose Building to be across Main Street from church. Included are Fellowship/Recreation Area, kitchen, day-care facilities, activity rooms, education class rooms.
3. Renovation of present Fellowship Hall area.

1998 - Still owe approximately $70,000 on Rolla Street buildings. Balance in Building Fund approximately $27,000
Demolition of Rolla Street buildings.

Historical Activities:

Sunday School
Women's Society
Soldiers
MSM/UMR Students
Wesley Foundation

Financial problems
Scandal

Music and Drama
John Scott - choir
Leon Woodman
organist
piano lessons
children's plays

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE:

Church is incorporated.

Administrative Council - combination of Administrative Board and Council on Ministries.

Administrative Committees
Nominations and Personnel - elected at Charge Conference
Pastor-Parish Relations
Finance
Trustees - legal directors of corporation

Program Committees
Age-Level and Family Ministries
Education
Evangelism
Membership Care
Outreach